

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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SUBJ: VISIT OF FLORIDA WHITE AMUR CARP SPECIALISTS

1. ON MAY 27 A THREE-MEMBER DELEGATION FROM THE FLORIDA NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT COMPLETED A MONTH-LONG VISIT TO THE USSR, TO STUDY THE EFFECT OF THE WHITE AMUR CARP ON RIPARIAN VEGETATION. THE FLORIDA DELEGATION VISITED MOSCOW, LENINGRAD, TASHKENT AND KRASNODAR. THE U.S. GROUP HAD BEEN SCHEDULED, AND HAD RECEIVED VISAS FOR ASHKABAD, BUT THEIR TRIP THERE WAS CANCELED AT VIRTUALLY THE LAST MINUTE WITHOUT EXPLANATION. THE FLORIDA SPECIALISTS HAD ALSO REQUESTED VISITS TO THE VOLGA DELTA, LAKE BALKASH, LAKE BAYKAL AND ALMA ATA AS WELL AS PORTIONS OF THE WHITE AMUR RIVER. THE SOVIETS TURNED DOWN THEIR REQUESTS TO VISIT THESE AREAS, THE LAST BECAUSE OF THE "MILITARY SENSITIVITY" OF THE REGION.

2. DURING THEIR VISIT TO THE USSR, THE AMERICAN CARP SPECIALISTS VISITED TWO ARTIFICIAL HATCHERIES AND ENJOYED AN EXCURSION ON UNCLASSIFIED

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THE KUBAN RIVER. FOR THE MOST PART, HOWEVER, THEY OBTAINED INFORMATION ON SOVIET EXPERIENCE WITH THE WHITE AMUR CARP BY DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIET SPECIALISTS RATHER THAN BY ON-SITE OBSERVATION. THE SOVIETS FLEW IN WHITE AMUR EXPERTS FROM MANY OF THE AREAS THAT THE DELEGATION HAD HOPED TO VISIT AND THE DELEGATION FOUND THAT SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS WERE FRUITFUL. ON THE WHOLE, THE U.S. SPECIALISTS WERE SATISFIED

WITH VISIT AND CONSIDERED THAT THEY HAD OBTAINED ENOUGH INFORMATION TO MAKE THE VISIT WORTHWHILE. THEY ALSO REPORTED THAT THE SOVIETS WERE VERY CONGENIAL HOSTS AND HAD MADE LARGE EFFORTS TO MEET U.S. DELEGATION REQUESTS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF GRANTING THEM ACCESS TO THE AREAS NOTED ABOVE.

3. THE U.S. GROUP HAD A NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS TO MAKE:

(A) SOVIET CARP SPECIALISTS INDIVIDUALLY APPEARED TO BE VERY COMPETENT, BUT THE SOVIET SCIENTISTS SEEMED TO BE VERY POORLY INFORMED ABOUT RESEARCH AND FIELD WORK GOING ON THE WHITE AMUR CARP OUTSIDE THEIR PARTICULAR GEOGRAPHIC REGION;

(B) THE SOVIETS ARE INTRODUCING A NUMBER OF FISH SPECIES WHEREEVER POSSIBLE TO INCREASE CATCH OF FISH, AND IMPORTANT PROTEIN SOURCE FOR SOVIET POPULATION. THE SOVIETS, THE U.S. DELEGATION NOTED, ARE ALSO INTRODUCING BIGHEAD AND SILVER CARP, PADDLEFISH, BUFFALOFISH AND THE CHANNEL CATFISH WHEREVER THEY SEEM TO BE ABLE TO SURVIVE. THE INTRODUCTION OF CERTAIN TYPES OF FISH, ESPECIALLY THE WHITE AMUR CARP, IS NOT BEING DONE HERE TO CONTROL VEGETATION, THE AIM OF SUCH INTRODUCTIONS IN THE U.S.

(C) THE LARGE SCALE INTRODUCTION OF THESE FISH TO AN ENVIRONMENT OF WHICH THEY ARE NOT NATIVE IS DONE, IT SEEMS, WITHOUT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS. U.S. DELEGATION NOTED THAT THIS PRACTICE IS STIRRING UP LOCAL OFFICIALS; LOCAL FISH SPECIALISTS, FOR INSTANCE, EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN TO U.S. DELEGATION ABOUT DECISIONS APPARENTLY MADE AT A UNCLASSIFIED

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HIGHER LEVEL TO INTRODUCE NON-NATIVE FISH TO LOCAL WATERS. IN SOME CASES THE DELEGATION NOTED LOCAL SPECIALISTS AND AUTHORITIES COMPLAINED ABOUT NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE INTRODUCTION OF THESE NEW FISH SPECIES.

4. FYI. DELEGATION ADVISED SCIOFFICE THAT THE FLORIDA NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT PLANS TO CONVENE A CONFERENCE ON THE WHITE AMUR CARP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN GAINESVILLE IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY, 1978. FLORIDA IS PLANNING TO INVITE ONE OR TWO SOVIET CAPR SPECILISTS TO ATTEND AND WILL PAY ALL THEIR EXPENSES. FLORIDA ALSO INTENDING TO INVITE WHITE AMUR CARP SPECIALISTS FROM THE PRC. END FYI. MATLOCK

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